



Hamilton Primary School

Headteacher: Mr G Aldous

Priory Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 6SG

Main Office Tel: 01494 522231 Fax: 01494 440576
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e-mail: office@hamilton-school.co.uk website: www.hamilton-school.co.uk



13 December 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

Consultation regarding potential conversion to academy status

The Governing Body of Hamilton Primary School is considering whether to convert to academy status or not.

As part of our detailed exploration we are seeking your views and comments, alongside the views of other interested parties. We are particularly interested in your views and the reasons behind your views since they will help governors ensure that they have considered all relevant issues.

The consultation runs between 15th December 2011 and 6th February 2012.

Enclosed is a short summary of why we are considering academy status and some further sources of information. Additional information is available on the school website www.hamilton-school.co.uk and also at www.education.gov.uk/academies

Please send your comments or views to the school using the email or post details at the bottom of the letter.

There will also be a meeting for parents on 26th January 2012 at 7.00pm in the Hampden Road Hall, where parents and carers will be able to share their views and ask questions. Please complete the tear-off slip below and return to the School Office.

The Governing Body anticipates making a final decision in February. This decision will be informed by the educational implications, legal advice, a financial appraisal and the feedback through this consultation.

We will write to you again following the governors final decision.

Yours sincerely

Mr. David Raleigh
Chair of Governing Body

Mr. G Aldous
Headteacher

Please send your views by:

Email: academy@bucksqfl.org.uk

Post: Mr G Aldous, Headteacher (Academy Consultation), Hamilton Primary School, Priory Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 6SG

Please return via the School Office

Name of pupil: Class:

Name of Parent(s):

I/We will/will not* be attending the parents' evening to discuss potential conversion to academy status on 26th January 2012

Signed:

*Please delete as appropriate



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Hamilton Primary School

Consultation regarding whether to convert to academy status

Consultation period: 15th December 2011 to 6th February 2012

The Governing Body of Hamilton Primary School is exploring whether to convert to academy status. As part of this exploration, the governors are seeking comments about whether to convert, especially the reasons for the views that are held. The responses will help inform governors' final decision.

Background

Over the school's long history it has always been at the forefront of educational practice. In more recent times it made the decision to be grant maintained in order to have more autonomy from the local authority. Subsequent administrations forced schools to come back under local authority control and at this point the school made the decision to keep some of its freedoms by transferring to a foundation school. As a school we will always strive for improvement in standards and cannot become complacent. The Governors have a responsibility to ensure that Hamilton Primary School continues to provide the best education for its pupils. Investigating whether academy status would benefit the school is part of this strategic role. As part of this process the Governing Body has submitted an initial application to the Secretary of State regarding the possibility of converting to academy status. This application does not commit the governors to converting, but makes the school eligible for funding to support the governors in their investigations in to the legal implications of converting to an academy

Rationale for exploring academy status

The primary focus of every school is to provide the highest possible quality education to their students. The rationale for exploring academy status is that it appears to offer:

- **Curriculum freedom:** Academies have more ability to develop, tailor, and organise their curriculum to meet student needs, and are not required to follow the National Curriculum;
- **Greater autonomy:** Academies have greater autonomy to take decisions that are in the best interests of their students – this is a continuation of the increasing responsibilities of schools that has been a feature of education over the last 20 years;
- **Leadership of educational development:** Academies are encouraged to play a leadership role in their communities and collaborate with other schools. Primary schools in Wycombe have a successful track record of collaborating with each other and with grammar and upper schools. Academy status would increase our ability to collaborate through greater autonomy, funding and greater resources, building on our successful links with others.
- **Greater resources:** Academies receive their share of funding that is currently retained by their local authority. For Hamilton Primary School this could be a significant sum. Some of this money would be required to re-provide services that are currently organised by Bucks County Council. The school would use the remainder to improve teaching and learning. We would target this money effectively, and get maximum value for money, to benefit the pupils. Up to a potential 6% increase in the school budget puts us in a strong position for the challenges of the coming years.

The purpose of more detailed investigation is to consider whether these potential benefits would be realised and how they would impact on pupils, and also to consider any risks or issues that Governors' need to be aware of before making a final decision.



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Key principles for an academy

The school is committed to its community ethos and its approach to collaboration irrespective of its legal status. If the school does convert to academy status, the Governing Body has agreed that the academy would:

- continue to offer inclusive and comprehensive education to our pupils;
- remain a school at the heart of our community, with the same admissions process,
- continue to recruit and retain the highest calibre staff. To date we have achieved this within the existing national and local frameworks for staff. These terms and conditions would be retained for staff;
- utilise the additional finances we would receive to improve our school even further, with a particular focus of the extra funding on teaching and learning, standards and progress;
- continue to be part of the local family of schools and collaborate with the other primary school, local grammar and upper schools and other partners to benefit pupils and staff;
- keep our school day and school year within the local context; and
- continue to collaborate with Bucks County Council.

What is an academy and how is it different from a foundation school?

An academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through Bucks County Council. An academy has several differences to a foundation school, including:

- Being responsible for admissions
- Freedom from the National Curriculum
- Receiving its share of the funding that is retained by Bucks County Council for maintained schools, and having the responsibility for providing those services
- Being part of a new charitable company (the academy trust) that would have responsibility for the academy. The governors of the academy would be the directors and trustees of this trust.

As a foundation school (as opposed to a maintained school) we already hold responsibility for admissions, ownership of land and buildings and employment of staff.

Where can I find further information? How can I have my say?

More detailed Questions and Answers about what academy status would mean are available on the school website (www.hamilton-school.co.uk) or from the school office.

Further information is also available on the Department for Education website (www.education.gov.uk/academies) or through an internet search of 'academy status'.

You can have your say by writing to the school:

Post: Mr G Aldous, Headteacher (Academy Consultation), Hamilton Primary School, Priory Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 6SG

Email: cacademy@bucksqfl.org.uk

What happens next?

In February the Governing Body anticipates making a final decision about whether to convert in April. Governors will make the decision that they believe is in the best interests of the school. This decision will be informed by the educational implications, legal advice, a financial appraisal, and the issues raised through this consultation.

If governors decide not to convert, Hamilton Primary School will remain a foundation school. If governors decide to convert, the conversion would take place at the start of April 2012 subject to all the official requirements being met.